

DANGER

Be Aware, Not Impaired

Impairment affects your ability to drive a car; it can also affect your parenting. Right now in Kentucky, a baby is **70 times more likely to die from unsafe sleep** than from a motor vehicle collision. The risk of death from unsafe sleep is much higher in babies if the caregiver is impaired. Driving a car “under the influence” of alcohol, street drugs, or some prescribed medicines is unsafe and can even be deadly. Similarly, **caring for a baby while “under the influence” can be DANGEROUS for the baby.**

If an impaired parent or caregiver places a baby in an unsafe sleep space, the baby can die. In the Kentucky External Panel reviewing child abuse deaths, there have been several cases where impaired caregivers shared a bed with their baby and the baby died from SIDS, suffocation or strangulation—all common

reasons for a baby to die if in an unsafe sleep environment. Many of these deaths would be preventable if the caregiver had followed the ABC’s of Safe Sleep for the baby.

Over half of the sleep-related infant deaths in Kentucky in 2013 involved a person and a baby sleeping in the same bed, some with and some without impairment. This is an unsafe practice. Many of these infant deaths can be prevented.

Why is impairment **DANGEROUS**?

When a person is impaired, his or her natural “ability to see, hear, walk, talk and judge distances” has been reduced. They may also have trouble paying attention or remembering. Impaired people often make bad or unsafe choices for themselves and others around them. Impairment is often caused by using alcohol and/or street drugs, but can also be from some prescription medications, especially those used to treat pain, anxiety, and depression, even if they are used as prescribed.





When a parent or caregiver of a baby is impaired, they may make **choices that are unsafe or dangerous for the baby**. One of the most dangerous of these bad choices is not following the ABCs of Safe Sleep. Whether you are impaired or sober, choosing unsafe sleep for a baby can be deadly.

PROTECT babies from the dangers of impairment and unsafe sleep

Keep the babies in your life SAFE...ABCs of Safe Sleep - EVERY time an infant sleeps

ALONE: Stay Close, Sleep Apart—Share the room, not the bed.

BACK: On Your Back for Nights and Naps—A baby should always sleep on their back.

CRIB: Clean, Clear Crib—No blankets, toys, pillows, bumpers, or other items that could cover a baby's face and suffocate them.

DANGER: Be Aware, Not Impaired—Drinking and drug use impair your ability to care for a baby, making bed-sharing and other unsafe sleep even more dangerous for the baby.

***Designated Dependable Adult** —“Designated (sober) drivers” protect people from the dangers of driving “under the influence.” So, if or when you know you will be impaired, think about finding someone to be your “designated, dependable (sober) adult.” Ask this person to help protect the baby from the dangers of unsafe sleep and more.

Other DANGERS of impairment

Because impairment can make people more easily frustrated, impaired caregivers are more likely to **accidentally hurt babies by shaking them**. This is very dangerous and often badly harms or even kills babies. If a baby will not sleep or stop crying, no matter what you try, **NEVER SHAKE a baby!** Check to see if the baby is hungry, tired, or needs changing. Cuddle, walk, or sing with the baby. Give the baby a warm bath. Call your doctor or a friend. If you feel yourself getting upset or angry, give yourself time to calm down by placing the baby in a safe sleep space (use ABCs) and walking into the next room. Go back and check on the baby about every 15 minutes. **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER shake a baby.**

References

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